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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. McNULTY).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

May 20, 2008.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MICHAEL R. McNULTY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 25 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 9:50 a.m.

U.S.-COLOMBIA TRADE PROMOTION AGREEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker and ladies and gentlemen of the House, I rise to ask what I consider to be pretty fair questions. That is, if you are in Latin America and you ask anyone in Latin America which country is America's most reliable ally, they likely would say the Republic of Colombia. If you ask anyone in Latin America which political leader in Latin America is America's best partner and most

reliable partner, they would say President Uribe, the democratically elected President of Colombia. Ladies and gentlemen, if you asked in Latin America who is the most popular political figure in the entire hemisphere in his own nation, you would discover it's President Uribe, the President of Colombia, who has an over 83 percent approval rating.

Why? Because he has made tremendous progress, strengthening what is Latin America's longest-standing democracy, reducing violence, making tremendous progress against the three terrorist groups that operate and that have operated for the last several decades in Colombia—the two Communist groups of the FARC and the ELM and the right-wing paramilitaries. He has made tremendous progress.

I would like, Mr. Speaker, to put into the RECORD two news stories from the BBC.

I would note the first story I want to put into the RECORD is the announcement that President Uribe was sending 14 of Colombia's most notorious paramilitary drug lords to the United States to face drug charges.

The second article I would like to put into the RECORD just ran this week. It was of a top commander of the FARC, which is the Communist narcotics trafficking terrorist organization which has been fighting the democratically elected government of Colombia.

In just this past week, one of their top commanders surrendered. Her name is Nelly Avila Moreno. Her nickname was Karina, and she is one of the most notorious FARC commanders. She not only surrendered but she called on other FARC rebels to follow her example and surrender, basically saying it's over; it's time to call it a day to stop the civil war, to stop the narcotics trafficking and to reach a peace agreement with the democratically elected Government of Colombia.

The reason I bring this up is, just a few weeks ago, this House, the Demo-

cratic majority, voted to turn its back on President Uribe. It voted to turn its back on the democratically elected Government of Colombia, America's most reliable partner. You think about it. We have no more reliable partner in Latin America when it comes to counterterrorism, to counternarcotics than the democratically elected Government of Colombia.

What is interesting is we have a trade agreement, a trade promotion agreement, that we have reached with Colombia. It is good for the United States. Right now, Colombian products enter the United States duty-free, tax-free, but U.S. products exported to Colombia face tariffs and taxes. Bulldozers made in my district face taxes of up to 12 to 15 percent, making our products less competitive with Asian products trying to get into the Colombian market as well. In the almost 2 years since this trade agreement was reached, the stalling efforts by this democratic leadership against Colombia has cost U.S. manufacturers and farmers \$1 billion in higher tariffs and in higher taxes on U.S. products.

What I point out is this trade agreement wipes out those taxes, making U.S. manufactured goods, U.S. corn and soybeans more competitive.

Again, Colombian products enter the United States' market duty-free today. They don't face those taxes when they come here, but our products face taxes when they go there. The folks back home whom I represent, they say, you know, we want an even playing field. We're happy to trade with anyone as long as we have an even playing field here. Their products come in duty-free. We want the same opportunity. President Uribe and the democratically elected Government of Colombia have agreed to do that. We just need to ratify the agreement, which is to the advantage of American manufacturers and to American farmers.

Ladies and gentlemen, the reason I mention the prosecution of the

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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